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Country note**

South Africa

Summary

The Executive Director presents the country note for South Africa for a programme of cooperation for the period 2002 to 2006.

The situation of children and women

1. Income distribution in South Africa is among the most unequal in the world. In 1996, almost 57 per cent of the population were living in poverty, and of these, two thirds were Africans. Racial inequalities still persist, with white per capita income almost nine times higher than that of Africans. The richest 10 per cent of households have more income growth than all other population groups in 1996. Inequality among African households is now comparable with the most unequal societies in the world. In largely rural Eastern Cape, 78 per cent of children live in poor households, compared to 20 per cent in Gauteng.

2. The infant mortality rate (IMR) is estimated at 45 per 1,000 live births and is higher where maternal literacy and other socio-economic conditions are poor. The country's aggregate under-five mortality rate is 59 per 1,000 live births, but the rate for Africans (63) is four times higher than that of whites (15). There is a high rate of stunting among children under five years old. The maternal mortality ratio remains high at 150 per 100,000 live births. South Africa has a high school enrolment rate of

* E/ICEF/2001/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2001.

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over 80 per cent, but there are high repetition rates at all levels, high drop-out rates and a high rate of adult illiteracy (33 per cent). In terms of social development and major intra-country inequalities, South Africa is at the lower end of the scale for upper-middle-income countries. One province in South Africa, Gauteng, produces more goods and services than virtually all other economies in Africa, yet the Human Development Index of another province, the Northern Province, is at the same level as the Congo.

3. The HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa has had, and will have, a dramatic impact on this situation. IMR is expected to increase to 61 per 1,000 live births and life expectancy to decrease from 68 to 48 years by 2010. By then, 25 per cent of the population is projected to be HIV-positive, the majority being young people in their productive and reproductive years. The 1999 Antenatal Clinic Study estimates HIV prevalence rates of 23 per cent among pregnant women, which could result in an additional 40,000-60,000 HIV-positive newborns per annum. Despite the high level of awareness of the virus (98 per cent in urban areas), there appears to be no change in sexual behaviour patterns. Socio-economic factors such as poverty, migrant labour, survival sex workers, the low status of women, gender-based violence, sexual abuse, illiteracy, the lack of formal education, stigma and discrimination are underlying causes of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Indeed, South Africa is at the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, having the largest number of people living with HIV/AIDS of any country ("Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic", Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2000). An increasing number of children are orphaned by AIDS. Although South Africa has one of the most sophisticated social security systems in sub-Saharan Africa, including a child support grant, it is clearly an unprecedented challenge for a newly unified system to cope with the increasing number of children in distress due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Therefore, building a rights-based culture is critical to tackling the pandemic.

4. Developing local government capacity for the delivery of public services is now recognized as a major priority of social development planning and action. The Office on the Rights of the Child (ORC) in the Presidency has emphasized and is fully committed to an enhanced decentralization process of the National Programme of Action (NPA). This is seen as a key strategy for increasing local government and community participation in the NPA process, and ensuring the full realization of children's and women's rights. While the norms and standards for the new progressive policies are being more clearly articulated, local institutional capabilities remain a challenge.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

5. The 1997-2001 programme of cooperation is based not on the traditional UNICEF service delivery and financial support strategies, but on the premise that the cooperation can contribute to an improved knowledge, information and policy base for child-centred development in South Africa. Various evaluations and day-to-day experience confirm the success of this approach and the wisdom of retaining it in the new programme.

6. Rigorous evaluations confirm that the NPA structure, as the main framework for the cooperation, has served to bring together sectoral structures around well-defined priorities for children and the realization of their rights. Support has been

given to implement the ambitious Municipal Systems Bill and its provisions for the mandatory design of integrated development plans. The challenge is to complement policy development and legislative reform at the national level through programme development and further legislative reform at provincial and local levels, where policies and constitutional provisions are interpreted and translated into action and subnational legislation. It is clear that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the facilitation of community capacity development and empowerment as well as local government capacity development.

7. The 1997-2001 programme coincided with a period of intensive national policy development. The programme's work on policies related to maternal mortality and children's right to basic education bore fruit when UNICEF-supported activities in the areas of maternal mortality reporting and early childhood development (ECD) were adopted as national policies in 1998 and 1999, respectively. UNICEF has supported a full-time expert in the Office of the President working closely with high-level policy makers. Although the Government is now in an intensive period of policy implementation, there is a continued need for child-centred policy development in areas such as the protection of orphans and child-friendly juvenile justice and correctional services.

8. Expanding access to timely programme-relevant information for all partners has proved an essential function. For instance, young people's community cultural projects have been linked with mainstream institutions, and initial support has been given to a network of organizations that can effectively share relevant development and child rights best practice information. Based on these experiences, communication and knowledge, especially practical knowledge, are critical resources enabling people, including children, to make better-informed choices about issues affecting their rights. UNICEF needs to explore and develop methods to encourage and facilitate participation by children and young people in decisions affecting their lives. Strong, decentralized and participatory information systems are the key to a stronger programme monitoring function.

9. In South Africa, the private sector has demonstrated that it has the resources to effectively support government structures and civil society to fulfil the social and economic rights of children. An example is its involvement in the food fortification strategy, whereby UNICEF facilitated a dialogue with the food producers who entered into partnership with the Government on the food fortification plan. The tax structure and incentives for private sector involvement are now the current focus of discussions. UNICEF will continue to play a catalytic role in developing such partnerships in support of the NPA and to create increased public awareness of child rights.

Proposed country programme strategy

10. The United Nations reform process at the country level and, in particular, preparation of the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) have been enriched substantially by joint and collaborative inter-agency review exercises. In addition to a classic Government of South Africa/UNICEF mid-term review (MTR), a United Nations inter-agency MTR was held by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF, with the participation of other United

Nations agencies. The strategy for the 2002-2006 country programme responds to the new thrusts and priorities of the country and UNICEF global policies, with the following country programme goals: (a) to contribute to the fulfilment of children's and women's rights, with an emphasis on the principles of universality and non-discrimination, through support to the NPA processes, local government and community structures; (b) to support national efforts to reduce the magnitude and impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and (c) to support learning processes and the application of knowledge by all duty-bearers and rights-holders for the fulfilment of children's and women's rights.

11. The country programme will focus on capacity development and advocacy as overall strategies for the promotion, respect, fulfilment and protection of the rights of children and women, with a focus on local and provincial actions. UNICEF support will continue to be knowledge-intensive and synergistically deployed in line with the following operational strategies: resource mobilization; participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation; training; policy review and implementation; communication and networking; information systems development; and operational and participatory research. Support will be prioritized around HIV/AIDS and the social dimension of integrated rural development, with a focus on three of the poorest provinces, namely, Northern Province, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, as established by the joint MTR and UNDAF. Support will also be provided through the national level to other provinces to advocate for child rights issues. The country programme will have four programmes, and a Knowledge Resources Service has been developed to design and implement systems and processes that facilitate access to and the integration of national and international best practices.

12. The **social policy for child rights** programme aims at supporting the realization of children's and women's rights through policy development and effective implementation and monitoring at all levels of society. To achieve this objective, the programme will ensure that: (a) capacities are developed and the socio-economic rights of the child are fully integrated in the design and implementation of the new local governance structures and mechanisms, in the context of the NPA decentralization process; (b) relevant operational research is undertaken so that social policies are reviewed and the rights of children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS are protected; and (c) professional advocacy is undertaken and partnerships are built so that the best interests of the child are always given full consideration, notably in the design of macroeconomic policies, the pattern of public expenditure, and legal and legislative processes.

13. The **basic social services** programme aims at integrating the classic social sector programmes. The objectives are to: (a) support the development of a more effective mechanism for universal access to primary health care, especially by emphasizing the rights of marginalized communities in rural and poor urban areas; (b) support equitable access to quality primary education, with greater retention and learning rates for each student, especially in areas where the right to education is most at risk; (c) strengthen support for sustainable ECD; and (d) strengthen systems that promote the rights of all children in need of special protection measures. The programme will also support provincial and local government structures to plan for the delivery of high-quality basic social services in an integrated and sustainable manner.

14. The **HIV/AIDS** programme will contribute to government efforts to reduce new infections of HIV among children, young people and women, as well as to improve the care and support for those already infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. In support of the HIV/AIDS/STD [sexually transmitted disease] Strategic Plan for South Africa (2000-2005), the specific objectives are to: (a) prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV; (b) reduce HIV transmission among adolescents and young people by involving them in their own development; and (c) assist in the realization of the rights of children in need of special protection as a result of the pandemic, in particular children orphaned by AIDS.

15. The **communication and community participation** programme, informed by the 1998/99 NPA evaluation, goes beyond the classic UNICEF external relations and advocacy functions — having less to do with technique, messages and packaging and more to do with communication that facilitates the process, ownership, equity and diversity of participatory decision-making. The programme aims to promote communication strategies and activities for child-friendly communities. This will be achieved by working with partners at all levels (community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media, government, etc.) to address the communication and information gaps and blockages that hinder the realization of child rights.

16. A sound partnership with the private sector can improve both the volume of the funds made available for children and the efficient allocation of the resources to programmes and projects within the country. The role of UNICEF will consist primarily of: (a) strengthening the process of collaboration and coordination among the private sector, Government, NGOs/community-based organizations and civil society with respect to planning and implementation of joint initiatives to fulfil child rights; and (b) enhancing mobilization for direct expenditure by the private sector in child rights-related projects. Within UNICEF, an evolution towards a programme that is funded largely through resources from profit-making corporations needs to be considered after the next country programme.

17. The main UNICEF partner will be the ORC, and it will work through the NPA framework and provincial plan of action structures. Support will be in the framework of existing integrated plans of Government. All studies, evaluations, surveys and other monitoring/evaluation activities will be consolidated in an integrated plan with the objective of ensuring the timely monitoring of the implementation process and the effectiveness of the country programme. The monitoring and evaluation framework will contribute to the development and strengthening of joint United Nations mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating programmes as part of the UNDAF process.

Estimated programme budget

Estimated programme cooperation, 2002-2006[a]

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	Regular resources	*Other resources*	*Total*
Social policy for child rights	635	1 558	2 193
Basic social services	1 907	12 469	14 376
HIV/AIDS	424	3 800	4 224
Communication and community participation	1 271	1 330	2 601
Cross-sectoral costs	222	1 008	1 230
Total	**4 459**	**20 165**	**24 624**

[a] These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.